

Explanation of a Hadith: A Woman Is an Adulteress for Arranging Her Own Marriage

by

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Argument:

We read in Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 3, Book 9, Hadith 1882:

It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that:

the Messenger of Allah said: "No woman should arrange the marriage of another woman, and no woman should arrange her own marriage. The adulteress is the one who arranges her own marriage."

This is outrageous! This hadeeth calls a Muslim girl an adulteress just because she couldn't secure her wali's permission. This is a huge exaggeration.

Response:

Imam Abu Bakr al-Jassas (d. 370 A.H.) said in his *Ahkam al-Qur'aan*:

وعلى أن هذا اللفظ خطأ بإجماع المسلمين ; لأن تزويجها نفسها ليس بزنا عند أحد من المسلمين والوطء غير مذكور فيه, فإن حملته على أنها زوجت نفسها ووطئها الزوج فهذا أيضا لا خلاف فيه أنه ليس بزنا ; لأن من لا يجيزه إنما يجعله نكاحا فاسدا يوجب المهر والعدة ويثبت به النسب إذا وطئ

This phrase is false according to the Ijmaa' of Muslims, for her marrying herself off is not considered adultery according to any Muslim without sexual intercourse taking place. However, even if you say that she married herself off and had sexual intercourse with her husband, this is still not considered adultery, and no Muslim would differ with that. Those who do not permit the woman to marry herself off render the marriage only to be a defective marriage [but not as an invalid adulterous one] which obligates the payment of dowry, the 'Iddah period, and establishment of lineage if sexual intercourse takes place.

He clarifies how this hadeeth should be understood:

وإنما معناه التحريم لا حقيقة الزنا ; وقد قالَ النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: " العينان تزنيان والرجلان تزنيان , فزنا العين النظر وزنا الرجلين المشي , ويصدق ذلك كله الفرج أو يكذبه " ; فأطلق اسم الزنا في هذه الوجوه على وجه المجاز ; إذ كان محرما.

Rather it implies that this act is forbidden, not literal adultery. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The two eyes commit adultery and the two feet commit

adultery. The adultery of the eye is looking, while the adultery of the two feet is walking. The private parts would then ascertain or deny this." Here, the Prophet named these acts "adultery" metaphorically due to them being forbidden.

Al-Jassas also said that the phrase "The adulteress is the one who arranges her own marriage" could possibly be Abu Hurayrah's own comments himself after narrating the hadeeth, and his words got mixed up with the hadeeth by others.¹

Allah knows best.

¹ Al-Jassas said:

وقد ذكر أن قوله: " الزانية هي التي تنكح نفسها " من قول أبي هُرَيْرَةَ.